

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

**Overview – Best Beginnings Child Care
Scholarships**

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Children with Special Needs

Supersedes: Child Care 1-4 (5/01/05)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98.20 – 47

General Rule Families of children with special needs are not placed on a waiting list, thereby guaranteeing a priority status for a child care scholarship. Child care providers are required to make a reasonable accommodation for children with special needs. If care requirements increase the cost of the care, one-time or ongoing costs may be paid from the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that businesses (including child care providers) make “reasonable accommodations” in order to include individuals with disabilities in their place of business. Montana’s new policy regarding special needs care and scholarship program must not supplant ADA requirements. Child care programs must first comply with the ADA, then access all other available resources and finally utilize the special needs scholarship enhancement.

Eligibility Families must meet eligibility requirements for a Best Beginnings child care scholarship, as outlined in Section 1-7 of this manual.

CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist’s Role

1. Child Care Resource and Referral Eligibility Specialist assists the family in determining eligibility and completing paperwork required in order to receive a Best Beginnings Scholarship. **As part of the initial eligibility determination process, the CCR&R staff determines if it is appropriate to apply for a special needs scholarship.** This determination is based on:

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

CHILD CARE

Section:

Overview – Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships

Subject:

Children with Special Needs

- ☐ The diagnosis and documentation of a disability, which must include written verification of the physical, emotional or mental disability from the appropriate authority;
- ☐ The parent's description of the child's needs; or
- ☐ Observation based on past difficulty maintaining a child care placement.

In order to qualify for the special needs scholarship program, a child must require special modifications/accommodations in the child care setting and may or may not have an identified disability. The family must provide permission for the CCR&R to pursue a Special Needs Scholarship reimbursement rate by signing the Family Consent Form.



Each CCR&R will designate an Early Childhood Specialist to complete the Special Needs Services process.

2. The CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist schedules and conducts an observation of the child. This observation is ideally completed in the child care facility that the child is attending. This observation should be scheduled with the child care provider, but also the CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist should keep the parent informed when the observation is scheduled.
3. The CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist and the family **complete the Special Needs Rating Scale** to identify the areas in which accommodations are required.
4. The CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist completes the **Scoring Worksheet** to determine the amount of additional special needs subsidy to be paid to the child care provider.
5. NOTE: the Scoring Worksheet provides only provisional approval for the special needs scholarship. Once the amount has been calculated, it must be approved by the Statewide Inclusion Coordinator (refer to



Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

**Overview – Best Beginnings Child Care
Scholarships**

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Children with Special Needs

section 6-13 for the Montana's Statewide Inclusion Coordinator contact information). The information may be sent via mail, e-mail or fax. When approval by the Statewide Inclusion Coordinator is received the special needs rate is entered into the CCUBS system for payment but is only approved for 60 days while the Child Care Plan is completed. The Early Childhood Specialist must Case Note this process on the family's Case Event in CCUBS.

**Individual
Child Care
Plan**

The family, child care provider, and other professionals working with the child complete the Child Care Plan. This plan provides documentation of the child's needs, identifies required accommodations (and estimated costs), identifies additional resources which may be available, and suggests at least two individuals who could provide additional information if needed.

- ☐ If a child is receiving services from a Developmental Disabilities Service Provider/Child and Family Service Provider, a staff person from that agency should be included in the development of the Plan and the Child Care Plan should be considered an addition to the child's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Educational Program (IEP).
- ☐ If the child is receiving special education services, a representative from the school should be included in the development of the Child Care Plan and it should be considered an addition to the child's IEP.
- ☐ If the child is not currently receiving early intervention or special education services, two things should occur.
 1. First, a referral should be made to the appropriate service provider to ensure that the family is aware of available services and that the child has access to these services.
 2. Second, the CCR&R staff person should assist the family in identifying a qualified professional who can participate in

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

**Overview – Best Beginnings Child Care
Scholarships**

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Children with Special Needs

developing the Child Care Plan. This individual may be a physician, psychologist, social worker, or other professional who knows the child's needs and can provide documentation that special accommodations are required. This may mean some children would initially benefit from the special needs subsidies who do not have any documentation of need. These children may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Child Care Plan is then submitted to the Statewide Inclusion Coordinator **within 45 days of the start of the child care special needs rate.** The Statewide Inclusion Coordinator will compare the Child Care Plan to the Rating Scale to be sure that the Plan supports the need for additional funds.

- ☐ If the Child Care Plan and the Rating Scale provide similar information, the special needs scholarship initially identified is approved.
- ☐ If the Child Care Plan does not identify accommodations that require additional costs and/or there is no documentation for the child's needs, the provisional special needs amount is revoked. The family will receive the typical Best Beginnings scholarship that is identified for their CCR&R District, facility type, and age of child.
- ☐ If the documentation on the Child Care Plan indicates a need for accommodations that are greater than those indicated on the Rating Scale, the Statewide Inclusion Coordinator may make modifications on the Rating Scale to reflect these changes and increase the special needs scholarship amount.

**Limits on Rate
Approval
Amounts**

The Statewide Inclusion Coordinator may approve a special needs rate of up to double the regular daily or hourly rate for the CCR&R district, type of facility, and type of care.

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

**Overview – Best Beginnings Child Care
Scholarships**

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Children with Special Needs

The Statewide Inclusion Coordinator will notify the Early Childhood Services Bureau when a request for a special needs rate is in excess of double the daily or hourly rate on a case-by-case basis.

**Entering a
Final Amount**

The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist will enter a final amount into the CCUBS system for the special needs rate that will support the child care placement within 60 days of the initial approval.

**One-Time
Expenses**

The Individual Child Care Plan may indicate that there is no need for ongoing subsidy support however there may be one-time expenses which will be required in order for the child to be successfully enrolled in a child care program. These costs might include a physical modification, positioning device, special training, or other cost that is unlikely to be required on an ongoing basis.

One-time payments may cover the cost of accommodations that go beyond the “reasonable accommodation” required by the ADA. All other resources need to be accessed before this option can be authorized.

The child care special needs subsidy may be used to cover the cost of one-time payments up to \$1,000 per child. The Statewide Inclusion Specialist must approve any request for a one-time payment.

- ⇒ The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist should direct the provider to return receipts for the expense within 30 days or be subject to an overpayment.
- ⇒ Receipts should be forwarded to the ECSB office.
- ⇒ ECSB should be notified in case of any overpayments for one-time payments to providers.

NOTE: Best Beginnings mini-grants may be used to support this need for children who are not eligible for a Special Needs Subsidy.